CHAPTER VIII

THE RETURN OF LICINIUS SURA

Nyria tells of how, by chance, the Domina encounters Salome—so-called wife of Licinius Sura—and their son: how Valeria visits the shop of Stephanus and how, when walking on the hill-side, she meets her old tutor, now Clement, Bishop of Rome: of how Euphena gave Valeria a last warning and of how Licinius Sura came forth from the shadow of his house and drew Valeria within the gate.

NYRIA: "And now I will tell thee of a certain happening which, seeming in itself of no great present import, yet held seed to bring forth fruit of sorrow ere many months should pass.

'Twas upon a day when my domina took me with her to visit Plinius and Antaeia at their villa at Laurentum: and the fierce heats of summer being close upon us, Valeria did command litters, with changes of bearers, that we might accomplish the jaunt to and fro before nightfall.1

My domina doth ever prefer the progress by litter save when the passage be long and arduous such as to the further estate of Plinius in Tuscany, whither we went later, a matter of several days.2

And that journey we took not till the summer following when Antaeia had been dead nigh a year, and Plinius, torn with grief, sought comfort in travel and lent his Tuscan villa to Valeria who was then aweary of Rome. Notwithstanding, toward the end of her term, he did go back to Tuscany bringing with him that fat and noble dame Hispulla and her young niece Calpurnia whom he had chanced to meet at Baiae, and after that, there was talk in Rome that Plinius might marry Calpurnia.

But I mind not when that marriage came to pass though I know within myself that it was so: and on this day of our jaunt to Laurentum we dreamed not of Antaeia's death nor of Plinius' second mating.3

The day we went to Laurentum was very fair, and when we had left the walls of Rome some way behind us, Valeria willed to go upon her feet for a space and bade her retinue to follow her. Our path wound within the borders of a wood, and, while we walked along—I lagging somewhat and Valeria lost in thought and scarce speaking—lo! a child darted from among the bushes, chasing hotly a great butterfly: and, as he ran across the path, he stumbled against an uprising root and fell almost at the feet of my lady, where he lay roaring lustily.

1 Laurentum was about sixteen miles from Rome, and though apparently not so beautiful or fashionable a place as Baiae, it still had powerful attractions for the wealthy Roman nobles. It chiefly consisted of the villas of such men and thus resembled some of the more distant suburbs of London. Note to Letter X, Bk. I, Pliny's Letters. See also Pliny's Letters, Bk. II, Ep. 17.


3 Pliny and his Wives. Appendix 18.
Now, I knew that Valeria cared not much for children, her own two sons being kept, as thou knowest, for their health, with their governor and his wife on their father’s estate at Forum Julii in Gaul. So methought she would have called a bearer to lift and tend the child. But somewhat to my wonder, and though her steward did come forward, she stooped herself and raised the boy to his feet and asked him kindly if he were hurt.

’Twas a sturdy little fellow, maybe of five years old, with clustering curls and with eyes of a clear grey-blue, dark-lashed and wondrous soft and winning. Still, he wept loudly and, standing there, stared up at my lady, and then seemed turned to awe by her beauty and her noble mien; for, while he gazed, he ceased from crying and of a sudden smiled and held forth his hand. Now, the eyes and the smile of the boy did fleetingly resemble the eyes and smile of his father. For then, coming nearer, I knew him to be the child of Licinius Sura and of the woman Salome, whom I had seen all together on the road that day when I had spoken to Licinius concerning Paulinus’s invitation to the farewell festival before my master departed for the war.

And, as I ran to my lady, I saw that she stood dumb-struck while her eyes seemed to search the child’s face. And then she turned with a little shake of her head as though she would banish a foolish fancy and signed to the steward close by. Whereat, he gave her a silver coin which she put into the boy’s hand bidding him buy something with it for consolation.

And behold, at that moment, Salome herself came out from the edge of the wood and rudely snatched the child from before my domina, saying wrathfully, ‘Have I not told thee, oft, that thou shouldst not talk with strangers?’

Then, angrily, she bade him give back the money or throw it from him, and, with that, she shook the child roughly so that the coin dropped to the ground and he, struggling and screaming again—for he liked not to lose the gift—resisted her as she bore him off, still chiding him loudly.

‘Remember, Marcus, whom thou art,’ said she. ‘Thou canst not learn too early what is due to the son of Marcus Licinius Sura and, as such, thou’lt take no alms from any persons, no matter of what grade they be.’

And by the woman’s flashing, backward look, I knew it was said through insolence so that my domina should hear and learn the truth. And I saw my domina draw herself up sharp as though some noxious thing had stung her. Nor gave she other sign that the woman’s words concerned her, but, never turning her head, walked on, cold and proud as if the matter were beneath her observation.

But, after a minute, she paused to pluck a branch of sweet-smelling brier and held it to her nostrils—methought to shield her face: and, presently, she signed to her bearers to lower the litters and, entering them again, we continued on our way. Being behind her, I saw not her face till a bend in the road shewed it to me, as she sat erect and still like a figure of marble, her eyes fixed straight before her and seeming to see naught.

Yet, afterward, when I stood in attendance behind her chair and watched her while she held converse with Plinius and Antaeia, methought she seemed more like the Valeria I had known in the beginning than her of these later days.

But my domina was wont to say that she could better talk with Plinius than with any other and that should there hap aught not to her liking, Plinius knew how to cover it or, at least, to straighten the matter.’
SOUL OF NYRIA

NYRIA: "I saw not Salome nor the child again and 'twas told me some time later—I am not sure by whom: methinks Gregorio may have spat it out in some fit of jealous rage—that she had gone away from Rome. Perchance, her going had to do with Licinius—I know not.

And still, to Valeria, there came no word from him and, as the weeks and the months went on, it seemed that, for very lack of love to feed her heart, she was fain to snatch at such sustenance as might feed her mind."

NYRIA: "Thou knowest that Valeria was very fond of walking. Now, during that time that Licinius was away, Valeria did some happy things such as she had not thought of doing before. We had many wanderings, she and I—in so far as was fitting for a Roman matron. Sometimes, she would walk down with me into the town and once she paid a visit to the shop of Stephanus. But for that I gave him warning, for Stephanus is but a trader and is not qualified to receive the great patrician ladies of Rome unless they come but to purchase goods for coin across his counter.

At first, when I told him, he seemed loth that she should come and, thou knowest, Stephanus can be rude if the humour take him. He stood very big within the shop door so that he almost filled it. Ascalaphus hung without in the sun and cried at me as I came:

' Hath the lady a mind to make a bargain? Hie thee, Stephanus, look out the best of thy goods.' Then when the bird heard me speak he did seem most glad to see me and cried again:

' Pretty maids be wise bargains . . . wise bargains . . . Stephanus, bring the necklet for the maid.'

'Tis no simple maid that cometh,' shouted Stephanus. ' Hold thy cursed tongue.' And then Stephanus did make kindly mock of me, saying, ' For here, verily, is a lady who hath half the gallants in Rome at her feet, and who visits whither she will. And she would fain turn thee and me, old bird, out of house and home and plant us in the gutter while she doth cast her queenly eye over such things as she may fancy within.'

Whereat, I laughed out—for I saw that Stephanus had regained his humour.

' Verily,' said I, ' when thou dost sit in the gutter, Stephanus, Nyria will come sit beside thee, but be sure thou hast all things ready for the lady Valeria, for it is her pleasure to visit thee this afternoon.'

And with that, I ran away down the street with Ascalaphus screeching after me.

' Haste thee! Nyria—haste—" The Furies catch thy heels "—which made me laugh and I was glad to hear the bird's unseemly prating again, for it minded me of the days when I used to steal down from Julia's for half an hour's comfort. But now I was rich, for I lacked not aught, and many a coin, too, came my way with which I might buy, if I chose, from the trays as I passed. Yet, seeing that I needed naught, I spent my coins among the Christian poor—for there were many who lacked much of this world's goods.

Now, that very afternoon, Valeria was borne in her litter down the Via Argentaria: and it was at such times her pleasure that I had my little litter behind her, for she liked not that I should be pushed in the crowd—the sight made her sick, she said, when by chance she saw another slave-girl
thus ill-served. 'And, truly,' said she, 'though I cannot regret the day
when thou didst shed thy blood for me'—meaning when the African had
struck me—'yet I would not that thou shouldst ever thus shed thy blood
again.'

So to-day I rode like a princess in state and had mine own litter and my
bearers who must needs obey my behests. But, as thou wouldst know,
I kept my place behind Valeria's: and when we reached the door of
Stephanus and he came forth and gave his shoulder to Valeria to dismount
I saw him cast a sidelong glance at me, for he had not seen my litter before,
and, methought, he was appraising it and questioning whether he could
have supplied one as good. But Denarmid, who was in attendance, came
forward to assist me to alight. Whereat, I smiled at Denarmid, he and
I being good friends. For, not long since, Denarmid had become a Christian
and but lately, I had seen him at a meeting for the first time. And that
night, walking home, he had confided to me how sore afraid he was of
Stephanus—who himself did sometimes attend the meetings but was not
like to become a Christian and was hard on such. 'Twas for my sake that
Stephanus came and would fetch me thence, for he liked not that I should
walk that long dark road alone. Wherefore, when Denarmid did tell me of
his fear, I took upon me to acquaint Stephanus seeing that he would not be
wroth with me—and, if he were, he must recover his mood as best he might.
But I knew that Stephanus would not discharge Denarmid from his
apprenticeship as the boy feared he might do.

Now, though Stephanus swore much, he did do naught. And he kept
Denarmid in favour, for the boy was a good salesman and shrewd. Likewise,
he was honest, as all Christians were: and for such to be in guard of
Stephanus's jewels was an important thing as thou wouldst understand.
And now Denarmid said to me:

'Thou art verily a fine lady, Nyria. Haply, thou hast come to make
purchase.'

But I laughed him to scorn. Yet I felt proud when I did enter the shop
and saw Valeria looking over all the things Stephanus displayed and making
choice of one thing and another that she fancied and bidding him obtain
for her a silver effigy of the Demeter she adored—which he said he could
do, but that it would take long to procure. And I, looking over a tray of
goods, did espy some British pearls that pleased me much, and, while I was
fingering them, Valeria glanced my way. 'Dost fancy them, Nyria?' she
said. 'Put them round thy neck.' And then she laughed.

'I trow thy skin is not so fair as once it was in Julia's time,' she said
'Thou sportest too boldly with the sun. But thou canst keep the pearls.
Verily, thou art worth more than they.'

Whereat Stephanus blushed and looked angered. 'Once,' he said half-
rudely, 'it had been Stephanus's lot to offer Nyria the best his shop
contained, but that day, me seems, is long dead.'

Valeria glanced from him to me and smiled amusedly. 'The love of a
maiden is not bought with ropes of pearls,' she said, 'though thou mayst
chain prisoners with them.'

But for me, I was glad to get my pearls. Yet, when it came to the paying
of the goods, Valeria did but ask the total sum and said she would send her
steward with the amount. But, meanwhile, if Stephanus so willed, she
would sign for it.

Whereat, he wrote for her the sum, but he had deducted the price of the
pearls: and, though Valeria was not over-quick in such matters, yet was she surprised to find the goods so cheap. For she had chosen a ruby corslet and some golden images for her room and a chain of pink topazes that became her well. And, glancing at the price, she said:

'I see, friend, thou hast no mind to make thy fortune.'

'Verily, lady,' Stephanus answered. 'A man looks for sweeter fortune than his goods can give him. And, if that be not his portion, he cares little. For of what use to build a cage if the song-bird be not there.'

'A pretty simile,' she said. 'But bring thy mind from poesy and tell me what thou dost charge for these goods—'

He ran them over to her, at which she nodded.

'Thou hast forgot the pearls,' she said—whereat Stephanus drew back.

'Thy pardon, lady, but, when first thou didst command me concerning Nyria, I told thee then that I took no payment for my service to the maid. That have I not ever done: and while Nyria lives, Stephanus lives to serve her. But he takes no payment—save such as she may herself choose to bestow.'

Valeria glanced at me. 'Verily, Nyria,' she said, 'thou mayest be in two minds. Wilt lay thy pearls back upon the counter—or keep them? They can be no gift of mine, it seems.'

'I'll keep them, lady,' I said. 'For I liked not to hurt Stephanus.'

'Then thou art the better for his gift,' she replied.

'Ay, lady,' I answered, 'and always have been through Stephanus, seeing such debts as I do owe him may never be repaid, though I gave him all I were worth.'

'He hath a different mind on that, it seems,' laughed Valeria, drawing up her palla. 'Good day to thee, good goldsmith. Some one is the richer, and the gods grant it may be thou.'

And with that we went back to our litters.

But Stephanus, having to attend Valeria to hers, had not time for a word with me.

Nevertheless, Ascalaphus, who was watching from his perch, did call out lustily:

'Hast done well, Stephanus—hast done well!—Drive not a dame too hard.'

I saw Valeria look round over her shoulder and wonder at the bird who spake many words of sense which Juvenal's boy pupils had taught him. But he had a wondrous wit of his own in the matter of applying them—or so it seemed.

I had not seen Juvenal for a long time—nor did I see him again until one day when I ran down to the shop whilst Valeria was with Licinius Sura. . . . Of that I will tell thee when the time comes. . . .'"
poor. Folks said it was since Julia died, for that she had kept him by the work she gave him to do. . . . And Valeria, nodding towards Matho's room, said:

'A scurvy knave and one with whom I'd have no dealings."

Thou knowest, Valeria was not wont to express herself so freely. But there were times when she was out with me alone in which she talked more as I myself might have spoken.

I had told her about that street which led down to the river whence one did enter the house, kept, as I knew, by a worthy Christian for the use of the lord Clement and for the passage of such as did desire the way to the Christian place of meeting. And Valeria would fain have gone down that passage. Not, methinks, that she sought to be a Christian but that, verily, her mind was full with the desire to see many things.

And so we did explore as far as might be. But, as thou wilt understand, certain roads, where such as I might have run unheed, were barred to a lady like Valeria. And our walks and litter-rides on these occasions were always taken, through the winter, in the afternoon—that would be between the hour of the mid-meal and the sunset.

Often, we would be borne to one of the gates of the city, and there we would leave the litters and walk out upon the hill-sides. And sometimes, Valeria would take that walk with me up to the hill-point thou knowest of. She liked that knoll, and while I gathered late blossoms and coloured leaves and berries for her rooms, she would sit herself upon the edge of it and look out across the country and she would say it seemed to her that one who dwelt on that spot might verily gain freedom. For, she could picture, she said, the soul, distraught from over-much commune with man, coming there and finding comfort in commune with the gods and such spirits as might be their messengers.

Then would I kneel beside her and tell her of that great and wonderful god—as it seemed to me—and of how He had spoken in my own heart and the promise He had given me that some day I should see His face. Yet the which, I, knowing now the truth of the Gospel tidings, looked not to see upon this earth, but knew it would surely image before me when I crossed the death-border.

And she would listen—Valeria always listened—and sometimes she would laugh and tease me and sometimes she would say, 'Meseems, Nyria, thou art nearer the truth than such as do philosophise at our fortnightly meetings. Alack! little maid, that so many amongst the great and wise should be concerning themselves with these problems of life and death and thou—a simple slave—darest to say thou dost bear the truth in thy breast.'

Wherefore, I desired to answer her as Clement had answered others in my hearing, that, even from the lips of the young and simple, God never fails to listen unto words of praise. Yet I liked not so to speak.

But I told her all I could—and all about our services—whereof she said she would take heed and Phileros should form notes of them for her that so she might turn them to account in the papers she was producing.

And when first I heard her say this, I was filled with horror, and prayed her of her grace to bear in mind that she had pledged her word to me before my baptism that she would maintain such things secret. . . . To which she answered laughingly:

'Then thou wouldst deprive me of a profitable means of information, Nyria. Thou hast not sufficient thought of the importance of literature.
Tacitus now would tell thee that a man should not regard the private details of his life save to turn them to account in the books that it be in his power to make. But thou art no historian, Nyria. Thou art no writer of romance. Yet, verily, meseems, when I look at thee, that there is a story written in thine eyes. But it is in a language which even I cannot interpret.

At which I smiled and blushed for I knew not what she meant. And she, leaning forward, said of a sudden: 'One I know would fain read that tale. Hath he not desired it of thee, Nyria?'

'I know not of whom thou speakest, Domina,' said I.

'Nay,' she said, 'Christians tell no lying tales: and thou dost lie, Nyria. But thy cheeks do tell the truth. Say, doth the worthy goldsmith hold the key to that language in which thy life's story is written?'

'I drew away and said, 'Nay, lady, nay. Stephanus is my friend. What meanest thou?'

'He would be more than friend to thee,' said Valeria, pointing, laughingly, to my necklace. 'And thou—thou hast stolen his British pearls for which I would have paid him had he let me, but thou dost reward him not.'

Her words grieved me, for I liked not to think that Stephanus was deprived because of me. 'Wherein can I reward Stephanus, lady?' I said. 'Nyria is but a slave, she hath naught with which to pay him.'

'Nyria can give him that which silver and gold cannot buy,' said Valeria earnestly, bending forward and looking closely at me. 'Ah, Nyria, thou art now a maiden grown and yet, methinks, at heart thou art but a child. Still, knowest thou not that thou dost bear within thy breast, alongside that priceless gem of truth of which we were speaking, one as fair and priceless of the kind that men would steal from thee? For men be robbers, Nyria. Avoid them—avoid them lest they rob thee of thy treasure.'

'Stephanus is no robber, lady,' I made answer. 'Stephanus would scorn to rob a maid.'

'Then is Stephanus nobler than the noblest,' she made answer. 'Since no lord in Rome would deny himself the joy of rifling from a maid that which not even repentance on his part might restore to her.'

I scarce knew of what she spake: and I made no answer.

'Avoid such robbers,' Valeria repeated. 'Avoid all that come to thee—whether they be in guise of brute beasts wandering at nightfall to slake their thirsty passions, or whether, haply, they come in some meek and humble guise, suing as a beggar at thy gates for that which thou mightst in charity bestow. Princes or beggars, brutes or men—they're all alike. Hold not forth thy hand to them lest thou be rifled beyond hope of restoration—'

Now this seemed to me most strange talk. But seeing that Valeria did seem to cast a slight upon Stephanus, I answered her as I thought was for his sake. 'Stephanus hath sued to me oft, Domina, in befitting manner as becometh his station and mine. Nevertheless, seeing I had no mind to wed, it hath not been on my lips to let him come and ask me of thee.'

'Oh, Nyria,' she said. 'It would go hardly with me if he did, for whether or nay I refused him—so thy heart went out to him, thou wouldst follow it; and of what value would that be which was left to serve thy poor mistress, seeing that the best part of thee would dwell within the goldsmith's breast. Ask it not of me, Nyria—ask it not—for thine own sake, child. For men may sue many times, but a maid gives herself but once. And this truth remains—that though, as some ravening wolf, ill-fate may snatch thy maid-
hood away, leaving thee as some despoiled flower to be flaunted on the breast of one unworthy, yet when love does come—whether, as I say, in the guise of prince or beggar, thou wilt have given thyself but once—and then—oh, ye gods! What then is left!

And as Valeria stood upon the hill-side and spake this, and it seemed as though she addressed herself not to me, I answered not.

Thou knowest, 'twas a wild and secluded spot whither we had come from the road, winding round uprisng rocks, behind which I had been wont to watch the Christians passing to their meeting-place. From there, I had shewn Valeria the twisting path by which they went.

Then, climbing the goat-track along which I was accustomed to mount the hill, we had reached the knoll I have told thee of, and on the brow of this she now stood while she talked to me, though in truth it seemed that she addressed the sky.

And when she made as if she would descend the knoll on its further side, I caught sight of a man who, with head bent in meditation, walked along that path leading to the road by which the Christians went.

Methought it must be one of these, seeing that none others knew that way, and I had uneasiness lest he like not Valeria's notice of the path. Therefore, I made excuse that the sun was fast lowering so that I might hasten her away.

But, as I glanced beyond Valeria in wonder who this man might be, she caught my eye and turned herself about, thus observing his approach.

'Ah! A stranger!' she said. 'Fear not, Nyria, none can rob us, seeing we have naught of value with us. Haply, this is one of those Christian folk.'

And gathering her palla and her robe about her so to step easily down the knoll, Valeria did glance once more swiftly, over her shoulder. But, with that look, she stayed on a sudden and gazed most earnestly on him who drew yet nearer.

Then I, seeing his face which was now upturned, as a side-beam of the sun going down into the west did fall upon it, knew surely that this was the lord Clement. But Valeria, standing with her back to the light and the hood drawn over her head, must have appeared to him as some veiled figure whom, haply, he knew not, for he advanced, though, as he did so, his glance fell on me and he smiled.

And I, loving him greatly, made as though I would go forward, for 'twas our custom to crave the bishop's blessing when one should meet him and the chance favoured. But Valeria said to me in surprise:

'Nyria, who cometh? Who is this?'

'It is the lord Clement, Domina,' I made answer—'him they call the bishop, chief priest and father in charge of our infant church.' For thus we were wont to style him, and thus I knew Valeria—to whom I had often spoken of him—would know who he were.

But Valeria stood upon the hill-side, like one carved in stone, and, as the lord Clement came close, she loosed the robe and palla from her hand, and throwing back her head so that the hood of her cloak dropped down upon her shoulders, she advanced with hands outheld.

'I cannot be mistaken,' she said—and, again, gazed at him most earnestly. At first I think he scarcely saw her, for his glance had gone past her to me, and he was about, methought, to put forth his hand for the blessing I desired. But seeing my lady thus, he stayed his motion and gazed at her.
'Florus,' she said, 'knowest thou me not?'

'Who calleth me?' he asked. And then again gazing at her, he cried,

'Lucia—tis thou!'

'Ay, ay,' she said, with a ring half of laughter, half of tears in her voice.

'Oh, faithful, noble creature—whither camest thou? Where hast thou been these many years?'

He spoke not at first, then, as she put her hands on his, he took them and answered slowly:

'Ay, many years—since they have changed the maid to wife and the child to woman, and Lucia is no more, save as Valeria—wife of Paulinus.'

Valeria made a petulant movement and half-drew herself away.

'Remind me not,' she cried: 'tis needless. But I forgot—thou knowest naught of my fortunes—and I, naught of thine.'

'Enough that, at least, thou hast not forgotten me, Lucia,' and he looked at her again most fixedly, seeming to see naught else.

'Where hast thou been?' she repeated. 'Is it thou of whom men have spoken as the leader of this new, seditious sect?'

He scarcely answered save by a movement of his head—it might have been assent or refusal: and still he looked at her but gently put her hands from him.

'I see thee well, Valeria?' he asked.

'Well—oh, ay, I am well,' she answered, 'though, methinks, I have not the rude health that Lucia had—who wast ever the most troublesome of thy pupils.'

'Dost remember the summer-house in the garden?' he said—'thy mother's garden in the villa on the Aventine!—Poor shabby, desolate villa. 'Twas sold, thou knowest, to some rising Pleb—and then again he left it and found no purchaser, and now it has fallen into disrepute and is sore neglected. I wandered there not long since."

'Into disrepute,' repeated Valeria. 'And why, thinkest thou?—Why, Florus—save that Vitellius's children were nurtured there! Ah! . . . But those were happy days, Florus. Hast thou the same Greek books from which thou didst instruct me? Dost thou remember the little scroll of blue and gold that I tried to imitate—for the which thou used to guide my hand?'

Valeria paused and laughed. Methought the laugh had somewhat in it that I did not understand. But on she went, prating of days when it seemed she had been half a babe, and he—my lord—her teacher. 'Twas strange, methought, and, scarce liking to overhear, I drew a little apart, wondering how these things had been. For Valeria had never spoken aught to me of her knowledge of Clement.

Just below my feet was the little dell wherein grew the brier bush where I had mourned for Valeria when Clement first came and comforted me, and I knelt down to see how the plant fared. The dead half had worn away and scarce a shrivelled leaf lay thereon. But, on the other side there had broken forth new shoots: and this I was amazed at, and yet glad to see. . . . And while I wondered, the two drew near to me and I heard Clement say, 'Thy way and mine, Valeria, lie different roads. When thou didst wed Paulinus, thine led thee to the hill-tops of life whereon the sun should shine and where the gaze of all men must needs follow thee. My path is hidden in the valleys. There, I work in darkness among the burdened souls of men, striving to

1 The Villa on Mount Aventine and the early association of Vitellius's family with Clement of Rome. See Appendix 19, Bk. III.
bring some light into that passage of theirs which, haply, is darker than the
darkest night that thou hast known.'

'Ah!' she cried, 'thou knowest not what I have gone through. Ah!
Florus, marriage is not all that modern Roman mothers would have us
believe. Thou, who wert the sole confidant of my childish griefs and pains—
thou—if thou hast any feeling left for the child whom thou didst once love
and tutor—to thee perchance I might, if I dared, tell much.'

'There is only one,' he said, 'to whom thou shouldst betray thy heart's
closest secrets. Paulinus established his claim to them on the day that he
took thee from thy mother's hearth.'

'And forfeited that claim long since,' she cried. 'Ah! prate not thus,
Florus—thou art Vitellia all again! But thou—oh, it is good to see thee
after these years. Why hast thou not been near me? I have lived—thank
the gods—alone this many a month past in my villa on the Coelian. But
had Paulinus been at home he would have welcomed thee.'

'I repeat, Domina,' said the bishop, 'my road leads me not to such houses
as that of the Illustrious Paulinus, no matter how friendly may be my feeling
for him.'

'Why callest thou me Domina?' she cried; 'I like it not—from thee.'

'Valeria, then,' he answered soothingly.

'Nay—nay—'tis Lucia—little Lucia,' she answered, putting her hand
against his and looking as I had ne'er thought to see my domina look—with
so glad a smile upon her face and such frank, sweet uplifting of her eyes to
his.

He met her look with one of tender kindliness and yet, methought, of
sorrow. 'Lady,' he said gently, 'Lucia died long ago: and only liveth
again in the wife of Paulinus. As such, it is not fitting that I should forget
her state.'

'Forget it all,' cried Valeria. 'Forget everything—but that I have sore
need of thee.' Now, again, I saw a change come over the bishop's face. He
seemed like one greatly harassed. He frowned and his face darkened and he
half-turned from her, while still he held her hand and she gazed up at him
anxiously.

'Think not,' he said, 'that I should ever forget the child whom, as thou
sayest, I did love and tutor. Lucia's name hath ever been the first upon my
lips in the prayers that I have offered to God who granteth all good things.
But, with Valeria—what have I to do?'

Valeria pressed closer to him and seemed about to speak, but he went on
slowly and solemnly:

'Thou didst ask me how I, for my part, have filled the long years. Ay,
Valeria! If Lucia died upon her wedding-day, Florus too died when he gave
himself to Christ. Now, and he turned round, 'it needs that I should tell
thee who I am. Men call me Clement. 'Twas my second name, as thou dost
know. And, too, they call me Bishop of the new-dawning Roman Church.'

'I know not this Church of which thou dost speak,' she answered. And
it seemed to me that she shrank from letting him go, though he drew a little
apart. 'But, methinks, it hath wondrous power if it calls so many into its
fold.'

'Thou art not a Christian, I know,' he said. 'But, tell me, wouldst thou
be one? If that were so—then might Clement come——'

'Come and teach me,' she cried.
He half-smiled and half-shook his head.
'Clement might send thee a teacher.'

'Nay, nay, I want no teacher—and no Clement,' she said. 'I know thee not by this strange new styling and I'll have naught to do with a Church that hath taken my best friend from me. 'Tis Florus whom I want—'Tis thou—who wert so much to me in olden days and didst implant into my girlish breast the seeds of love for Greece. Wouldst thou not come and see how I have nurtured them?'

Now, the bishop seemed as though he scarce knew how to answer.

'Come,' she persisted, and then half-laughing, said, 'My house is now known as the meeting-ground of some of the most cultured minds in Rome. Tacitus hath lectured there—and Plinius hath given a discourse upon the refinements common to both sexes, and amusing he made it. One and another have spoken—even Apollonius. See, I can boast men of note. Come thou and hear them, Florus. In former days, thou wouldst have loved to do so.'

'My time is too fully occupied,' he said. 'If it would pleasure thee I had almost said that I would it were not so—for Valeria.'

'I'll not let thee go till thou dost promise,' she cried, holding him back by his cloak and seeming more childlike than I had ever seen Valeria.

But as she did so, his glance fell upon me. I had uprisen beside the brier bush.

'Ah, Nyria,' he exclaimed kindly: and I knelt, but saw that his mind was too full of other matters to give me, as I had hoped, a blessing.

'What dost thou here?' he cried, glancing down to the half-dead bush.

'Why, 'tis the very spot whereon I did first encounter thee, Nyria.'

Then, turning to Valeria, he said: 'Here, upon this hillside, two years and more ago, I met this little maid in sore grief because thou wert ill, and, here, we prayed for thee—did not we, Nyria? And thy prayer was answered, child?'

'Yes, lord,' I answered, meekly making an obeisance.

'So thou wast the diviner!' cried Valeria. 'And I knew it not.'

But at the thought her face changed, and I saw that she was thinking of Marcus Licinius Sura.

'Didst concern thyself with my illness, Florus?' she asked. 'Or with aught that did concern me in those long years of thy silence?'

He looked down upon her. 'Yes, verily—' he said: and methought his voice was grave. 'It grows late,' he said. 'Again—thy way and mine lie different roads, else would I accompany thee': and he made as though he would bow and pass on, at which I was surprised, for had I been alone, methought, the lord Clement would have borne me company adown the hill upon the other side. But he seemed unwilling.

'I'll not let thee go,' cried Valeria playfully barring his way, 'till thou dost tell me when we shall meet again. Flavius Archippus is lecturing at my house within nine days. Wilt come and hear him—though I would in truth that thou didst not wait till then.'

But he seemed unwilling, and I, not liking to seem to listen, strolled away, so that I heard not the last few words of their discourse. But then Valeria called me: and he was just bidding her farewell.

'Go, thou,' he said, 'and may thy path be light.'

'Alas!' she cried, 'there is no more light to shine upon it. Methinks, sometimes, that my heaven hath been darkened.'

'Haply, thou dost not look above to the light which is beyond the clouds,'
he said. And with that he seemed to bless her, holding both her hands in his, and then turned along his own path. But my heart was sore, for Clement had need led me not.

Then, presently, spake Valeria, as we passed on together down the hill: 'Verily, Domitilla can keep her own counsel,' said she. 'Who could tell that this unknown cousin of hers of whom she did prate at times—to which prating I paid small heed—was in truth mine old friend? Though I was dead indeed not to remember that connection of which he himself had told me in former times.'

But I said naught, for Valeria often talked like that to me in a way that scarce called for any word.

Now it was getting dark, and as we went down the hill-side there were many shadows among the boulders and the bushes that began to thrust forth green: and here, upon the side of our path, was one bigger than the rest, which as we came nearer, seemed to move: and Valeria, who was gazing down the path before her, was a little frightened and drew closer to me. 'Yonder is someone crouching,' she said: and I, too, was frightened. But, as we came yet nearer, the shadow uprose, and I saw it was a little figure, scarce higher than a child, supporting itself upon a stick, and behold! while I yet wondered what it could be, there came a laugh, and I knew Euphena's voice.

'Step warily, pretty ladies,' she said. 'Step warily, for verily there be pitfalls spread for the unseeing. And they that do hasten too rapidly upon a downward road be apt to land themselves whither they would not.' And with that, she drew some rapid signs upon the ground with the point of her stick: and I, not wanting Valeria to be touched by the craft of her magic, did draw her aside out of the path.

But Euphena had no mind to let us go by till she had said her say. 'Never fear, pretty Nyria,' she cried. 'Yon proud dame is safe from Euphena's magic. Euphena willeth her naught that is ill. Heed not Nyria's fear, lady, for Euphena is but an aged crone who hath no power left in her to work ill.'

And as Valeria stopped, surprised, to listen, Euphena finished malignantly with a chuckle. 'Nay, verily, seeing that enough ill hath been wrought already,' she cried.

Valeria clutched my hand and gazed at her. 'Who art thou?' she said. 'Where have I seen thee before?' 'So thou knowest me, lady!' cried Euphena. 'Tis well. 'Tis well... For Euphena, once known, is not readily forgotten. But fear not, I say, for time is slow and there be yet many hours before the tale shall be accomplished, of the which Euphena did tell thee at Julia's banquet. Nevertheless—' and Euphena drew closer to her, 'though time be slow and the wheel of life large—for therefore is it long of turning—yet it doth turn surely, though its speed be not as quick as, haply, some might desire. And for thee, thou proud and lovely dame, thou scion of human passions who dost yet deal in them thyself seeing thou too art human—verily, I say to thee, the wheel is turning—turning slowly—but 'tis above thy head. Then, Valeria, wait—wait—wait—for, ere it turneth round again, that which Euphena hath prophesied shall have come and gone, and Valeria too shall have gone with those that love—and those that scorned her... Whither?' Euphena threw out her arms as though she seemed to ask a question that
none might answer; and Valeria stared at her. 'Thou art a strange old crone,' she said. 'Haply, thou art one of these fortune-telling beggars that do infest the streets. 'Tis far for thee to wander. Dost desire the price of a night's lodging?' And Valeria fumbled in her pouch, but she carried little coin with her.

'Nay—nay,' cried Euphena. 'I desire no coin—not I. Once, I desired coin, but now, there is naught that money can buy for Euphena. Pay me not. I am but the voice of the wind—but the voice of the great spirit that goeth abroad over the earth telling men that to which they will not listen. Heed me, or heed me not—it matters naught. For thou and I, alike, fulfil our portion and go hence.'

And Euphena, again spreading her arms out, seemed to vanish into the night.

But Valeria was surprised and a little frightened. I could not see her face for the dusk had been gathering. But, by the words she spoke as we went down the path, I saw that she remembered Julia's banquet. She talked a little of it and then fell into silence: and so we reached the road that wound up the Celian.

I would have thee understand that we had come up, as thou knowest, on to the hill-side above the house of Licinius, so that we had to descend past it and then to wind round the road that led towards Valeria's house.

Valeria's mind, I could see, was bent much upon Euphena. So I told her I knew naught of what Euphena did nor where she dwelt; but I had thought she might have made herself a home among the hills, seeing 'twas always up there that I met her.

Now, as we came down towards the house of Licinius Sura, a man came out of the little gate under the plane-trees and did advance swiftly. He was wrapped in a long dark cloak that fell below his knees, with a hood over his head. But there was somewhat in his gait that seemed familiar and I saw that Valeria saw it too, for, of a sudden she started, and I felt her press my hand closely against her side.

Thou knowest, there should have been torches lit, had Licinius been known to be at home, for the road was darkened by the overhanging trees though the dusk had not quite fallen, and a few bright stars had begun to shine out in the sky which was still of a pale, pearly blue.

The man, as he came out of the gate, had seemed to hesitate and stood there a moment watching us as though he had half a mind to go the other way; but, seeing us closer, he delayed and drew back into the shadow of the plane-trees. I felt Valeria's heart flutter and she hastened her steps, glancing towards the gate as though surprised and frightened: and, as we passed, the figure came out and stood for a moment in our path: and then, of a sudden, the man threw back his cloak: and I saw that it was Licinius Sura.

Valeria knew him too. He said no word, but held out his arms. At which she stood silent in the roadway and lifted her face to his, clutching her cloak together beneath her chin and having dropped my hand.

'Thou seest,' he said, with the laugh I did remember, 'I have returned. Am I welcome, Valeria?'

She made no answer but a sort of shudder passed over her: and then he drew closer with his arms held out.

'Verily, a surprise,' he said. 'A joyous surprise. Earnest of a happy future. . . . Hast no word for me, Valeria?
She answered him, then, seeming to try to speak like herself.

'Fate has had many surprises for me to-day: And this--'

'And this, the best I trust,' he said, and caught her to him.

Now I, standing a little apart, saw a group of figures come round the end of the road, a little higher up, and halt and look towards Licinius's house. Two, there were, or three, and as I looked, they seemed to step into the shadows and were gone, but I feared for Valeria and drew closer to her and to Licinius.

'May it please thee, Domina,' I said, 'someone cometh.'

'Ha!' Licinius cried. 'Watch-dog, it is thou!' Then, drawing Valeria quickly behind the plane-tree, he said: 'Hide thyself, child, and follow me.'

The next moment the gate had opened and we were within. Valeria clung to his arm and seemed as if she could not let him go, and with his arm around her, he half-led, half-carried her round the end of the house to where was the little door that I knew of. And, seeing that he had bidden me hide and that I liked not to be caught there, I, too, drew into the shadow of the bushes and waited for her to come forth again.'
CHAPTER IX

WHAT OF SALOME!

Nyria tells of the renewed love between Valeria and Licinius Sura and of Valeria’s visits to the house of Licinius. Also, of certain talk she overheard at the shop of Stephanus concerning the marvellous disappearance of Apollonius the Wonder-worker from before the Tribunal held by Caesar. Likewise, of the intrusion of Salome into the villa of Licinius Sura.

Nyria: “Now, after that evening when I waited long in the inner court for Valeria to come forth from the meeting with Licinius Sura, we went on the next day and on many other days to the Licinian villa. We would go at different hours, but usually in the afternoon, and then the visit would often last till dusk.

Nevertheless, the front of Licinius’s house was still all closed and the place remained, as before, wrapped in silence and shadow. For, save one or two trusted slaves, Licinius had brought none to serve him and I heard him tell my domina that his business in Rome was secret, and that he desired none should know of his presence in the city.

Thus, in the daytime, he would remain within his own garden walls, showing himself not in the streets nor even walking along quiet roads until dusk had fallen and then would he go with his cloak drawn closely about his neck so as somewhat to conceal his face.

Methinks, he never told my domina what that secret business might be. Nor was she one to question him, seeing that she cared for naught but to have him back and to know that now—as verily it did seem—he was all her own.

As I have told thee, it had become Valeria’s custom to ramble much afoot, though at starting she would take her litter, since it would not be well for her to go forth from her own house in broad daylight without any retinue. Verily, ‘tis a little hard—for, when she goeth thus to her lover, she must dress poorly. . . . She hath a pale brown cloak—half-palla, which she can drape about her head, but she doth wear a lovely stola underneath. . . . Then, after we have proceeded a little distance in a different direction, she will alight at some secluded spot, making it appear that she seeketh wild flowers, and, presently, she will dismiss the bearers, saying it is her pleasure to go home on foot. Or she will appoint the litters to meet us at some further place and at a certain hour, later.

When we are out of sight, she will draw the palla over her head and wind one fold of it round the lower part of her face, or she will shroud herself in a veil. She hath a thick staff and oft doth pretend to be lame, and, mayhap, she will take my arm and bid me put mine around her and we will be as two slave-women, one aiding the other who would appear to be infirm or sick. . . .

Yes, I will take thee with my domina to the house of Licinius. . . . To-day
we are walking from the Caelian. It is not very far going down this way, her house, as thou knowest, being not quite at the top of the hill. The road doth wind round to it and one can see the open country and the Aqueducts and the great hill Soracte afar. I can see the sun shining on it and the snow which yet lingers. Not yet are there poppies abloom in the Campagna—that little red flower with the cup—Stephanus doth make much medicine from the poppies. I am ever glad to be with Stephanus when he goeth to pluck poppies.

There are no houses just near my domina's villa, which hath round it a good deal of garden. Other houses lie beyond hers but I know not who doth live in them. None who are poor dwell on the Caelian. . . . Thou knowest, as one passes down the Caelian by the Aventine, the road between the hills becomes more level. We might go round along the back of the hill, but the shortest way is by Julia's house, now standing empty upon its plateau, which spreads over the lower part of the hill.

Then we wind up past other houses. The villa of Licinius is on a small knoll which juts out beyond Julia's house and seems below the road. . . .

We go not into Licinius's house by the chief door and through the atrium, but enter by the gate at the side, through which he drew in my domina on that first evening. Then, round by the court and garden to that portico which hath, growing over it, jasmine creepers—that one with little yellow blossoms now covering the pillars, and, later, in summer, the leafy kind with thick, white, scented flowers which hangeth over the lintel and maketh a pleasant shade.

Well have I grown to know the place—the portico with the yellow bloom and the stone steps which lead down into the room where he doth await her coming.

I can see him as he standeth just inside the door, with the sunlight through the trellis falling on him. He is a little taller than she, and yet she is tall for a woman.

He hath no toga on—only his tunic. The colour? Nay, I know not . . . (hesitating). It is so odd . . . when I have to tell thee anything thou dost specially want to know I can see it exactly, but sometimes thou dost seem to slip away and the picture shifts.1 . . . I have seen him in many different tunics. At first, methought, this was a purple one, and then it seemed to be of a reddish brown. . . . Now, I see that it is the warm light purple which she doth prefer. . . . It is fastened on the shoulders with strong-looking gold buckles. The tunic cometh just below the knees: the legs are bare. . . . Thou knowest, they have different kinds of shoes. Some are laced with broad flat thongs and go half-way up the legs—he is wearing those now; and his tunic is very full from the waist to the knees and is draped up over the waist-line to the shoulders, where the folds come closer together, smooth and narrow. . . . Licinius is not fat, but well-covered. His face is rather thin, he has dark hair, very curly, and a clear and pale complexion. The nose is thin and well-shaped, a little high, but it is short—not like the Jewish nose. He has no hair on his face—she did not like it—and there is a little cleft upon his bare chin. The eyebrows are dark and set close together but they shoot up sharply into wide bows. His eyes are grey-blue with a dark rim: they seem the pair to her eyes and, when they look at her,

1 This might suggest mind-control on the part of the Recorder, who, in fact, was quite unconscious of exercising it and had no picture of Licinius in her mind.
they are lovely eyes. But sometimes there is a look in them that I do not like.

He throweth his arms out from the shoulders—it is a gesture of his—opening them wide to welcome her, his head is held back and the eyes are shining.

She goeth in very quietly—she hath a stately walk. Then she flingeth her wrapper back and I take it from her. To-day, her stola is pale green with a broad band of purple and gold embroidery and she is wearing a slender gold chain with a little cross of pearls that Licinius gave her—when she cometh here, she weareth only some jewel that he hath given her. But he hath not given her much. And then, I must look out through the window. And I fold up her palla and go forth and wait.

'Tis a private room to himself, this one in which they sit. In most houses it would answer to the tablinum where the master doth receive his clients. But in Licinius's villa, the tablinum, in the middle of the central passage, is dark and he doth not greatly use it. This room that looketh on the portico is small but bright and made for comfort. The floor is of marble: there are stools scattered about, and a couch on which he resteth, and a table whereon he writes. And there are flowers—he doth always have fresh flowers when my domina is coming and on a stand there is a statue which she did give him. I know not its meaning. Perchance thou wilt know—'Tis as a couch of marble with a cushion rolled, and the form of a winged boy doth lie asleep upon the couch, with one arm thrown up and one hand uncurled, and a bow and a box of arrows lie near to his hand. And, leaning over him, is a woman who hath a lamp in her hand and she doth gaze upon him with a tender, worshipping look upon her face. Methinks, my domina did mean that she loves Licinius in the way of that woman. He is very fond of this statue and doth have it close within his view.

For the rest, Licinius's villa is like other good Roman villas, save that it is smaller than the best of them. The house hath in it some nice things but it is not grand. The room in which he sleepeth doth open from that one wherein they are sitting, and the villa hath a garden closed in by many trees, and that doth make it easy for my domina to come and go unobserved.

Licinius had brought from Judea that cross of pearls he gave her and had told her it was a sign which certain Jews held sacred, in memory of One who had died upon the Cross. And he spake of that strange sacrifice of which 'twas plain to me, he had no true understanding. For I had learned the meaning of that sacrifice and I longed to hear more of the land where the Master Christ had lived and suffered. But they two took no heed of me and I would sit me down upon the ground, spreading my cloak beneath me, for here be no flagged court but only one of gravel which is sometimes moist with early rain. And often, as I sat, I would get snatches of their talk, and when it seemed to be of matters beyond themselves I thought me that I might hear it. But when it grew to closer love-talk, then would I move away, for they never heeded me and I scarce liked to listen.

Oh! oft, they do talk together of stories that are written in those Greek scrolls of the which some are known to me, seeing that my domina hath told me many things of Greece. For I have spoken to thee of that strange belief my domina hath that once she did live in Greece and I have heard Licinius
say to her that he holdeth the same belief, and that he and she did live and
love in Greece as now they live and love in Rome. Mayhap, it be his true
belief and yet . . . I know not.

Now, oft, meseems, thatLiciniushathinhima curious falseness and that,
yet, he knoweth it not as falseness. This doth come out in little ways
wherein he will deceive my domina. . . . But the little things do show what
the greater things would be.

For, if he doth want to put her off or doth not come when she hath
expected him, he maketh false excuse. . . . Perchance, because he doth
fear to pain her, or, perhaps, he giveth not the real reason lest she should
bear that reason down. . . .

Dost thou think that were he married to another he should owe more
duty to his wife than to my domina? Nay, methinks, he should not. . . .
Yet from his words, 'tis ever in his mind that he doth give my domina as
much as she giveth him, and assuredly that is not so. . . . Never doth he
take the burden of their love upon him, the which lieth heavy on her. Were
it not that, through Archigenes, the promise of Paulinus doth secure her
from her husband, I know not how she would save herself. Methinks, that,
had she been thus forced, she would have told Paulinus everything.

Sure am I that Licinius doth never truly satisfy her. . . . He could not,
for 'tis not in him. . . . Ever, there seemeth that restless craving in her life
which she doth hide beneath her outward coldness. Oh, not to him. . . .
Never was she cold to him, though sometimes, methought, she did upbraid
him for those things in which he failed her. Then, would he tell her she was
just like other women, and that would cut her more than all. . . .

Ay, ever at first he is very tender. Yet it doth hap, when I have left
them thus and, after a time, return, that a cloud hath come between them.
Thou knowest how hard it is to watch the hurt to one thou lovest, when yet
there be naught that thou canst do to ease the pain. And sometimes, she
doeth seem so unhappy when we leave his house, or when he hath been with
her and goeth away. . . .

I cannot bear that one I hold so high should be in such case, as that
others might point the finger at her. . . . For myself, I see no sin in love
like hers. She loveth because she must . . . as a flower doth open to the
sun. 'Tis marvellous the change, when that which, before, to others, hath
seemed a lovely shape of marble doth now, to him, breathe life and love.
. . . Methinks he cannot truly know the like of woman that she be.

It doth seem to me that men in Rome love only because there is a need
in them which must be satisfied and that the love doth never truly last.
And yet . . . Stephanus is not like that. . . . I would that I could under-
stand these matters. . . . Methinks, that when love doth come, thou canst
not fight against it and that, when thou dost desire to love, thou canst not
make it come. . . .

Now, sometimes, if she did chance to notice me as I sat without, my domina
would let me go away, bidding me return at such an hour when she would
be ready to depart. At that time, there was not in my mind the thought
of being spied upon and I feared not to leave Valeria, seeing that oft she
would take her noonday meal with Licinius and remain with him till the
sun went down.

Yet 'twas not well to wander too great a distance and thus I would betake
me to the temple which standeth further back upon the hill and nearer

1 The temple of Diana on the Aventine.
to its crown, not far from the house of Sura, and I would sit me on the steps up into the round court on which the sun doth shine.

I can lead thee to the outside of the temple but until I have been myself I cannot take thee in. Never yet have I been inside. I believe that within the shrine there is a statue to that goddess which is most beautiful. . . .

The roof is round on the top—no, the temple is not round, but there is a dome and there are square pillars in front and steps that go up to it, wide and shallow. . . . And there are marble figures of dogs outside the temple, in different position as if ready for the hunt. . . . Why are there dogs, I wonder! And there is a male figure . . . I am trying to get it. . . . I cannot tell thee who it is. . . . He hath a spear in his hand as if he too were going to hunt. He is a beautiful young man. . . . Oh! Stop! Everything is moving. . . . It doth seem as though the dogs were pulling him down. . . . There are several dogs amongst the pillars. . . . Then, as I look, come many dogs with their mouths wide open and their heads raised up and they seem to be tearing the youth. One dog hath its teeth in his knee and he is lifting his spear to strike it. This is at the inner entrance to the temple . . . all the single dogs are outside. . . . I cannot go any further within. . . .

'Twas on one of those days which my domina did spend at the villa with Licinius that she gave me permission to absent myself for several hours and, seeing that the two were in happy mood that day, methought I would visit the shop of Stephanus.

Now, I had seen but little of Stephanus in this autumn and the past summer. I mind me that we made a jaunt again to the villa at Laurentum and that the lady Hispulla and her niece Calpurnia were of the company and that my domina did confer with Plinius upon the choice of certain persons renowned in art and letters who should be invited to hold discourse at her winter meetings.

And when these had begun and I was sometimes free, yet sought I not Stephanus. For the mind of him—as thou knowest and as I well knew—was still turned toward me, and this although he spoke not now of love or marriage. In truth, he seemed less inclined to render me his protection when, on my way back from the meeting-place of the Christians, I had needs traverse that long dim piece of road where once I had been wont to tremble at his following tread. But the evenings were lighter now and, methinks, he had bidden Denarmid watch my steps, for the boy did often company me in returning from the Christians’ meetings.

But, thou knowest, Stephanus was my friend and Stephanus could never be aught but kind: and when once he said to me, ‘ And art thou so well cared for, Nyria, that now thou hast no need of friend Stephanus? ’ methought there was sadness in his voice, and my heart did turn toward Stephanus. So, on that day of which I speak, I went down past the Forum to the street where is the shop of Stephanus, and when I approached the door I knew by the several lads who were making sport with Ascalaphus, as the bird put forth its head in the sun and screeched out wicked words and laughter, that Juvenal must be within.

Now, Juvenal was gossiping with Stephanus, and both seemed so full of their talk that they scarce observed my entrance.

1 Clearly, Nyria had not heard the story of Actaeon. (Ed.)
Stephanus gave me a kindly smile and Juvenal did just say, 'Ah! Here is Nyria!' and, with that, he went on, 'What thinkest thou, Stephanus? Hath this man the power of a god seeing he did remove himself without sign of going from the midst of the tribunal?'

But Stephanus shook his head. 'Such things are not for a low order of mind to deal with,' he said. 'I know naught of witchcraft, whereof this savoureth. . . . Haply, Ascleptario could inform thee. Methinks the man must have had a body of disciples around him who did cover his departure.'

'Ay, but he was in bonds,' cried Juvenal, 'and the jailers stood on either side.'

Again Stephanus shook his head.

'He hath got away, it seems. Verily, many a luckless prisoner in Rome would be glad to know the trick.'

'Of whom speakest thou?' I asked, putting my hand on Stephanus's arm.

'Tis of Apollonius the wonder-worker who was arraigned before Caesar for judgment in this Judaean scare,' said Stephanus.

Now, seeing that Licinius had lately returned from Judaea and that this, by its repute, was the land that I most loved, I would fain have questioned him, for I had caught some talk, so I told thee, from Licinius to Valeria of his having been concerned in some matter there. But I held my peace.

'Now,' said Juvenal, 'those others have got off, it seems, since Apollonius did plead for them so well. But Nerva will not be allowed to enter Rome.'

'Rome hath indeed turned milk-faced,' said Stephanus, 'if she feareth such as Nerva.'

'Tis an amiable old fellow but one who could not wield the sword—the which savours of the Christians,' cried Juvenal with scorn of that sect.

Whereat, Stephanus pursed his lips and nodded, but he would not speak of the Christians before me; and yet I now knew that Stephanus doth favour certain among the Christians who are friends of Domitilla, and that he hath attended some few services—though that, methinks, was most for me. For at heart Stephanus was no Christian.

'Religion doth make a fine excuse,' quoth Juvenal. 'Religion and politics have ever gone together—the State and the temple-service forsooth! They both are hollow now. . . . But these Christians are in no way strong enough to crush such as Caesar, though 'tis said that he fears the Jews.'

'Domitian is at heart a coward,' returned Stephanus. 'One who wrought the evil he hath done had like to fear every man's hand, since, surely, some day there shall arise a man who doth not, like all the rest, brook injury, and will raise the dagger against him and thus fulfil the Chaldæan prophecy.'

Now, much of this was new to me, and I hated Caesar and feared him still, though I never saw him now. And, as I stood there listening, Juvenal did make comment on my round eyes and a white face, and said:

'Tis unseemly talk for such as thee, Nyria, who livest now—so they say—in the lap of luxury. If thou wouldst retain thy comforts, pretty maid, beware thee of the Christians.'

But, to me, it seemed that I could not deny my faith; so I made answer that I was a Christian, whereat Stephanus growled and Juvenal did look at me with surprise. Then he made a rough kind of bow, seeming to show mock of me.

'In truth, I thought that Nyria had done better for herself,' he said.

1 For the reported magical disappearance of Apollonius from the tribunal of Domitian, see Appendix 19, Bk. III.
But I was flushed and hurt and like to cry, and I said naught.

'Nyria hath not been well advised: nevertheless, she meaneth no harm,' said Stephanus.

Then I went forth and spoke to Ascalaphus and gave the bird some sweetmeats that I had bought from a tray-seller. For now I had always money, and thus 'twas nothing to spend a sesterce upon some sweets. Thereon, Ascalaphus chuckled and did kiss me through the bars of his cage and, as he did so, I saw Stephanus look without and watch me. But he said no word, and I hied me away again.

And as I walked along the hill-side where it was more shady and green,—I had not got my litter that day for we never took the litters to Licinius's house—and as I was drawing near the villa, but not within its sight, I saw a lady's litter going up the road before me, and, down the road, coming towards me, walked Gregorio who seemed well-pleased with himself and yet was scowling. He always hath a jaunty, swinging walk, tossing his mantle as he goeth, and wearing in his cap a feather that doth flutter in the breeze.

Then as he met the lady's litter, still a few yards before me, it stopped and so did he and drew to its side. He doffed his cap most gallantly and leaned upon the litter, while the bearers rested the poles upon their shoulders, the while he chatted familiarly with her who was within.

Now, not knowing whom it might be, glanced as I went by, and saw that Thanna sat therein. I was surprised to see that Gregorio should know her thus well, for Thanna never visited me, though we were still friends and I met her sometimes. She smiled and waved her hand, but Gregorio looked at me angrily—never did he cast me aught but a surly look—and I went on and met another litter descending. . . . And Thanna, haply, thinking she would overtake me, had dismissed Gregorio and came on upon my heels. . . .

Now the person in the other litter was that woman Salome whom we had seen with the child on the way to Laurentum many months ago. This I saw when the litter came near; and I saw that she looked black and angry. . . . To-day, the child was not with her. . . . Afterwards, I heard that she had been refused admittance to the Licinian villa and was wroth thereat. She was biting her lips in anger and her hands were held stretched out on each side of the litter. The curtains were open, for women like Thanna and Salome do usually ride with their curtains open. 'Tis only a noble lady who doth draw her curtains. . . .

And, as Salome's litter approached that of Thanna, Thanna called out a salutation, the which, thinking it was for me, I stopped and turned to answer. . . . But soon I saw that Thanna and Salome were acquainted, and Thanna, forgetting me, bade her bearers turn her litter round and the two went down the hill together. But I heard Salome angrily complaining in her shrill persistent voice, which Thanna met with laughing retorts—though I could not catch the words—and seemed to make light of Salome's trouble.

I went on to the villa and round to the portico entrance and found Licinius soothing my domina who, likewise, seemed sore vexed about something, though then I knew not what it was. I soon guessed, however, from words let drop, that it was because of Salome who had sent a message to Licinius, the delivery of which Valeria had heard. . . .

But she became somewhat pacified, seeing that Licinius had denied the
woman entrance, and swore by everything he held dear, that she was naught to him save as his child's mother.

And he held Valeria in his arms and kissed her many times, and, half-laughing, bade her compare herself with Salome and question wherein she had cause for jealousy. At which, Valeria, through tears and smiles, did become satisfied.

And we cloaked and went upon our way.

Now I told my domina somewhat of the sayings of Juvenal and Stephanus concerning Apollonius and his strange disappearance from before the tribunal of Caesar, of which it seemed she had heard tell but did not wholly believe the tale. For, she said, it pleased not Apollonius to be called the Wonderworker.

Nevertheless, afterward, I did hear others say that it was no idle gossip, and they told how he had been there in the court in the midst of them all... and lo! he was gone. And that he did other marvels, of the which I have spoken to thee—and did cure many of the people's ills by his wondrous power.

And then I did wonder in myself whence cometh the power and if, mayhap, it be from the devil. For Christ hath said:

'He that is not with Me is against Me'; and Apollonius worketh not in the name of the Master.

My domina sayeth that Apollonius is really good... Yet have I thought... How can she tell? My domina is so strange. She will speak of the letters of Peter and Paul and say they must have been clever and good men and that—as she sayeth of Apollonius—they must have been very interesting. But she doth not seem to understand. She taketh only the clever side of things... I am afraid she might not be able to tell about Apollonius..."
CHAPTER X
THE LIE WHICH NYRIA TOLD

Nyria tells of the lecture given by Euphrates at the Valerian villa: of the return of Paulinus to Rome and of the lie she told him which weighed upon her soul. Likewise of the plottings of Regulus and Martial, and of the fever which took her, so that Stephanus arranged for her removal to the hills.

NYRIA: "Now, all through that second winter, the lectures went on and came not to an end until Licinius had been some little while in Rome. Valeria did ask him at the beginning to attend them, but he refused for the reason he had given—that his business in the city was secret and he would not that her friends should question him upon it. Moreover, he said, 'twere no joy for either of them to meet under the eyes of a gaping crowd.

Therefore, she pressed him no further for, methinks, she too was fearful lest news of their meetings should reach the ear of Paulinus. Nor might she, for her own pleasure's sake, break the order of these receptions, seeing that she was pledged alike to the company of friends and to certain orators engaged to give discourses before them.

Wouldst thou that I take thee to the oration of one who speaketh to-day? 'Tis a friend of the great Apollonius—a philosopher of the sect called Stoics, Euphrates by name. . . .

I believe that he is himself from Asia Minor—or, perchance, Greece . . . I know not. But he is well spoken of in Rome and known to the Emperor, and moreover his wife is a rich Roman lady. . . . He hath a clever face. His hair is rather grey in places, very thick over the temples and sweeping back from off his forehead. The eyes are keen and dark: the nose thin and high. He is wearing—no, I think it is not the toga, but a cloak . . . yes, the cloak of a Greek philosopher. . . . Thou dost understand that I see the thing like a picture, but when it comes to the thoughts about it, I am sometimes puzzled. . . .

The room is that which is used for banquets. At the side, near the end, there is a platform and, just beyond, a large open window, and the air which enters through it is soft and pleasant. . . .

Many people have come, but 'tis not the fashionable set. These are persons who care for things to do with the mind, not with the body. . . . Sulpicia is there, sitting opposite the platform. Her dress? (laughing). Thou dost always ask about the women's attire! What doth it matter? . . . I never care. . . .

Well, she hath on a brown stola with a border of embroidery and it is caught upon the shoulders with brooches of yellow stones. Her hair is simply dressed, yet, less simply than my domina's. It is curled in front,

1 For an interesting point in regard to the name Euphrates, wherein Nyria was right and the Recorder wrong, see Appendix 20, Bk. III.
but not in the manner of Julia’s head-tiring. She hath her tablets and her stilus and is taking notes. There is a man leaning over the back of her chair, trying to talk to her, but she wants him not.

The chairs are not exactly in rows: they are just placed about, facing the platform. Plinius is between the platform and the window. He is standing with his arms folded and he carries a scroll in his hand and is wearing a purple toga. He looks well. There is always something to admire in Plinius. He is fresh and clean and hath a manly air. He was talking to my domina just now and hath moved up there.

My domina is sitting in a chair with broad arms and her hands are thrown loosely over them. She hath a troubled look. She is not taking notes, and this she doeth usually, even in her own house. Tacitus is beside her. . . . Methought I had described him to thee. Well, that is strange. . . . He hath a rather thin face—one seems to see the man’s quality in his face; thou knowest, Tacitus is one of the men in Rome who, they say, is really good. His eyes are soft and kind but they have a look of distance as though he wished not to be close to people. . . .

I have sometimes thought that he doth care for my domina. He is always very courteous and oft gazes at her and yet he seemeth to put up something between him and her. I would that my domina had loved him instead of Licinius. . . . But how could she do that? Thou canst not make thyself love. . . .

She is not listening to the orator. . . . I can see her thoughts and the way they go. ‘Tis to the house of Licinius—to the trellis-covered portico where spreads the yellow jasmine. She is troubled about Licinius. In truth, I have seen that, since he returned to Rome, she hath greatly changed. The calm that, with time, did come upon her, hath now departed, and from fevered joy and expectation she turneth again to brooding sadness until the hour approaches when she may go to him or that he may come to her. Now, she is troubled by the fear which doth ever assail her that, some day, something may happen to make all open and known. . . . She doth not shrink for herself—she would go through more than that for him. But she is wondering how it would be if his love should fail her. ‘Tis true she must doubt him, else she could not think like that. Oh, I am afraid; I am afraid. . . . He doth love her but he doth not sustain her. And he is all that she hath. . . . And that is what she is thinking. . . .

Now, there are refreshments being handed round—fruit and cakes and cold drinks, wine and water and that bubbling white stuff—what is it called?—with snow. . . .

Thou wouldst learn the names of other persons, here, but it is difficult for me to know who all the guests are, for I do not announce them. . . . At Julia’s I got to know them. But the people who come here are often quite different from those who went to Julia’s house.

No, the Vestals are not here. . . . It is curious about the Vestals. Of course they could come to a lecture like this if they were invited. But I know not if my domina doth favour them. Methinks she feels that they ought to be better than they are. And yet, to hear her talk, it might seem that she did not mind if people were good or not. . . . It is strange that the Vestals should care so greatly for the Races and Shows and Games. But I suppose they have so much teaching at home that they need something different for amusement. . . .
I would that I could tell thee more of the Vestals. 'Twas in the house of Julia that I heard most about them, and in truth I know but little.

I would try to tell thee what the lecture is about. . . . It is hard for me to get through. . . . I understand not the half of it and I listen not. . . . I just come in and out. . . .

Oft, it all seemeth to me great foolishness and that most of those who listen do only come that they may talk afterwards—saying 'this orator is wrong,' or 'that other may be more right.' Thou knowest about the two sides of philosophers. Now, this one taketh the side of hardness and of standing aloof from all joy that may hap.

'Tis not wholly well,' he saith, 'to cut thyself away from all that pertaineth to the world, but, if the things which be pleasing fail thee, thou shouldst be indifferent and take good and ill fortune with equal satisfaction.' . . . But, methinks, 'tis not in nature that pleasure and hardship should be equal. And, moreover, it seemeth to me that this philosopher practeth not wisely of the virtue of living poorly, when all do know that he hath many slaves and doth himself live richly. . . . This, 'tis said, because of his wife who hath much money and must have her litter and her bearers and her women. . . . And, how knoweth he what it would be like to give up his fortune seeing that he hath never done so? . . . And yet, meseems, there be more real good in him than, perchance, he himself knoweth, seeing that he could not be a friend of the great Apollonius if there were not in him some measure of greatness.

Now, at the last, he doth talk with more excitement and waveth the roll of parchment in his hand while he doth mightily urge them all to be plain of living and to eschew pomp and luxury, telling them that it matters naught whether we have hard times or pleasant times, since all cometh alike in the end. Nevertheless, methinks, it doth matter much to us whether we live in pain or at our ease: and so it seemed to me his words did carry a false-sounding ring. . . .

I can get no more. . . . My head feels confused. . . . There are so many flowers in the room. No, that is not the reason. I understand it not. My domina hath always many flowers. . . . There are sheaves of daffodils amid their green . . . and violets and myrtles . . . and small orange trees are placed around the platform.

Now Euphrates stroketh his beard1 with one hand and still he waveth the scroll with the other. Methinks, he doth believe that he meaneth it all. . . .

'Twas toward the late spring that my master Paulinus2 came back to Rome. The war was almost over, though not wholly, and the great Generals were permitted to return.

Methinks that, at first, Paulinus was glad to be at home. Yet was his greeting of Valeria very different from that which I remembered when he had come back from Egypt and on his way to the villa had bought me in the slave-market and brought me as a gift to my domina. Now, he was courteous to her in his behaviour, but somewhat rough and distant, and never did he pass by that side of the house where were her apartments nor cross the threshold of her room.

1 Euphrates and his beard. See Appendix 20, Bk. III.
2 April or early May, A.D. 95.
Methought that, at times, he did regard her with a certain suspicion though outwardly he paid her all due honour. Meseemed, also, that, for the first time, Valeria did fail somewhat in her demeanour to him, for now, this lacked its former cold ease and oft, methought, a certain fear was hidden beneath that dignity which still upheld her.

Yet, to appearance, they stood together and once Paulinus did show himself at a lecture—methinks, so that all might know his approval of these new, learned pursuits. 'Twas at the last of those receptions; but soon he did quit the circle, making jest that the sword and the State were nigher to his understanding than this mighty philosophy which interested his wife so deeply.

Thou knowest, Paulinus held high office under Caesar and after his return was often away at Albanum. For Domitian did spend much time in his palace by the lake and when the Emperor was absent from Rome certain high persons of the State must needs be within call. Paulinus had no villa there, though, had Valeria been willing, he would then have hired one for her comfort and pleasure. But she refused, pleading that she was over-much occupied with her studies in Rome, and he pressed not the matter. Mayhap, he cared not that she should be with him, for Paulinus, it seemed to me, had also greatly changed and the talk went—methinks Aeola caught it from Crispus—that he preferred the riotous company gathered round Caesar in his palace at Albanum, and that, among other ladies, 'twas Galla to whom Paulinus now took his gifts of jewels—which, methinks, vexed Martial, for he had been wont to boast of the favours of Galla to himself.¹

Nevertheless am I sure that 'twas greatly to my master's satisfaction thus finding Valeria concerned with these learned matters and hearing that they had been her chief occupation during his absence.

Methinks, he did not gain knowledge of Licinius's secret habitation of the Sura villa till several weeks later. Methinks, also, that he was half-loth to believe ill against Valeria, and yet half-eager to learn whatsoever might be told him. But he would fain have proved her above reproach because she was his wife, the upholder of his name and the mother of his two sons who should follow in the State after him. Wherefore, when he saw that she mixed chiefly with learned persons and interested herself in affairs of the mind, that was the answer he gave to those who brought hints of wrong against her.

Now, seeing that Paulinus did doubt Valeria, I questioned within me who in Rome had fathomed the secret purpose of Licinius in hiding his return, and who had gained knowledge of his goings in to the Cœlian villa. For when Licinius doth go to my domina's house, 'tis after the sun hath set, and he entereth by the side door, of which he hath the key and which leadeth only into the garden of her apartments. Then, am I on the watch for his coming, having given out to Corellia that my lady, being weary, would be denied to any who might seek her company, and that till she doth summon her women, Nyria alone shall be in attendance in the ante-room. For Valeria feareth—and Licinius, likewise—lest Chabrias or some other slave should betray his presence.

But at this time I knew not that when Paulinus with Asiaticus came back from Egypt, 'twas Gregorio who maliciously let fall to his master certain information concerning the visits of Licinius in his absence. . . These had been in those weeks after the death of Julia, when I might not go forth to

¹ The expensive favours of Galla. See Appendix 21, Bk. III.
the Coelian or any whither, before we were all sold in the slave-market and Paulinus bought me and gave me to Valeria. . . .

Now 'twas the fancy—of which I could not be quite certain—that one evening I had seen Gregorio prying near the garden door, and, also, something sly and curious in the manner of the boy, which set my thoughts towards him. Likewise, a certain thing he did, concerning the garden of Liciniius, the manner of which had puzzled me.

That garden had been laid out in little terraces which fall away below the jasmine portico somewhat in the fashion of my domina's garden, but it is smaller and the ground ill-tended. And, noting this, my domina did wish that the young Greek Gregorio should arrange Liciniius's garden, he being clever in such devisings, and skilful in the matter of flowers. There was no harm in thus lending her slave. She might well have done it with her husband's knowledge as a friendly act and a compliment to the boy's taste in gardening. . . . But Gregorio sulked and made wry looks, and said words deserving of punishment. . . . Methinks the boy hath somewhat in his brain. That he should give trouble to the domina! She could have sold him and sent him right away for speaking thus displeasingly. But she careth not to rouse herself for such as that. . . . Then, some while afterward, he did come to her, cringing to obey her wishes, saying that he knew he was her slave and did but ask her commands. . . . I liked not that he should offer thus. The boy hath been strange-behaved of late. . . . Now he doth put himself forward to gain the notice of Paulinus and to serve his master in little ways which are not his business. And, methinks Paulinus doth favour the boy. . . . I understand it not. . . ."

RECOR D E R : The Instrument's voice weakened—a sign that she needed a night's rest. . . . Upon the following day, she went back to ancient Rome and again became the slave-girl of the first century.

NYRIA : "Thou dost ask me concerning the woman Salome and the place she held in the house of Licinius Sura. . . . I know not if there be much that I can tell thee. . . . That was a strange woman—a Jewess—of the same race as that of Licinius Sura's mother. For I know that he hath Jewish blood in him, though in manner and feature, he appeareth more Roman than Jew. I have heard that he was the son of the elder Licinius Sura and, by adoption, his heir.

Thou mayst remember the words of Paulinus when at the farewell party he did jest with Licinius upon the bond with Salome, and it seemed to me that 'twas his wish to try Valeria in the matter. The common talk went that Salome had long lived with Licinius and that he was the father of her child. Yet by law she was not his wife.

Thou knowest there are different kinds of marriage in Rome. There is the religious ceremony and there is the marriage by which a woman becomes a man's wife if she hath lived with him and hath not been away from him for a whole year. If the man doth not wish her for his legal wife he will send her away from his house for three nights and then she hath no lawful hold upon him. . . . Salome was the wife of Licinius in such fashion. I think that, for a long while after he knew my domina, he still kept Salome with him. But afterward, when my domina became as his wife, then he gave up the other. He hath never had her since but hath always driven her away—or so he sayeth. . . . I have heard him so tell my domina, and, likewise, that it was but an . . .
arrangement such as is common with many a patrician Roman. . . . She was lower in rank than Licinius, and much, much lower than my domina. I believe that she was of the higher class of slave and that he did free her.

When she left him she took the child away with her. Now methinks that Licinius had cared very much for the boy and had looked towards bringing him up to be a man. Yet, after the woman and the child had been sent away, it was as though they had never been. . . . And that was strange and, meseemed, that it was not just. . . . But it showed me that he did very greatly love my domina. Oft have I thought of that. . . .

But, after he had sent her away, the woman would come back to his house to see him and would make trouble about herself and the child. . . . 'Tis true that he held her unwelcome, nevertheless she came.

I mind me of another day when I had gone forth and returned. Not that day on which Salome and Thanna met each other near to the house of Licinius, but one when I found my domina in yet deeper sorrow and vexation, and Licinius at his wits' end, and, methought, like enough to lie so that he might soothe her troubled spirit. . . . And he tried to make out that he knew not whether the child were verily his, and in that, it seemed to me, he was not fair nor just. . . . Methinks, that he was afeard of Salome, and that there was somewhat more which gave her power over him.

However that might have been, he said naught of it to Valeria. It seemed that on this day my domina guessed, or knew, that he had conferred lengthily with the woman, not sending her away at once as was agreed. . . . I know not exactly how the matter stood for 'twas on an afternoon when I had gone again to visit Stephanus. Though she said naught, sure am I that the thought of the boy pricked my domina. For she knew that although she was dearest the other woman was mother to Licinius's child and had a right which none might touch. My domina doth not care for children, but she did wish to give Licinius everything, and that is the greatest thing a woman can give to the man she loves. But she was affrighted. Though she loved him so much and would have left all for him had he thus willed, it hath come to me that she might not have had the strength. . . . I am sure there were times when she felt that she could not give up her position and her house and, though she cared not for Paulinus, the protection of his name. She knew how it would gall her to be outside all that. . . .

Much lay in Licinius's power. He could have made things different had he thus willed. . . . But he had not courage. He thought of his name. . . . There were many of his family, and some were persons of importance, and Licinius thought much of that. . . . Palfurius Sura. . . . Yes, he was one, but I know not how near a relation. Methinks, it was partly the feeling for his family that made Licinius act as he did about my domina. Moreover, he was not very rich, and he feared poverty with her. He had land in Rome: his money lay there. Had he incurred the wrath of Cæsar and put himself in the power of Paulinus, who is Domitian's friend, his property might have been confiscated. He was afraid of that. . . . Thou seest, in some ways Licinius was weak. He could not bear to be ill thought of—to lose status—is that the word thou dost use?

It was all right about that other woman. . . . She was not his legal wife. He could have got rid of her and nobody would have thought of him the worse. . . .

1 For particulars of the family of Marcus Licinius Sura and of the other two members of it here mentioned by Nyria, see Appendix 4, Bk. III.
And there was more... There was plotting, of which I knew not then—the which, if it had succeeded, would have made him great and powerful. Methinks the time was not yet ripe... But my mind is greatly confused. There are many things of which I knew naught... and others which rise out of strange blackness, and I can scarce tell if they be true or not...

There is one thing which doth stand out quite clear and which hath caused me great grief. 'Twas the lie I had told Paulinus... For I did lie to him... And I knew that to lie is a great sin and my heart was sore concerning Paulinus... And I knew, also, that Paulinus trusted me... and he had ever been a good friend to Nyria.

'Twas on this wise. Once, my domina was very nearly discovered. Somebody must have seen her at Licinius's house—I know not how—and then straightway have told her husband... We had left the litters and she had bidden them meet us at a certain place, and we had gone to Licinius's villa, and afterward had found the litters again... And then I had to leave my domina—I mind not now what the errand was upon which I went—and, as I walked down, I met Paulinus... We knew not that he was returned from Albanum... He stopped me... I seemed to know within me that some one had betrayed us. He was black with fury. He took me by the shoulder. And then he questioned me. Had I been with the Domina that afternoon? Whither had we gone? What had we done? He said he would not ask his wife unless he knew that what he had heard were true, and that he questioned me because I never lied.

But I did lie then... I told him that we had been to shops and that we had left the litters and had gone to walk in some meadows and had wandered far and that we had met the litters again. And I told him wherefore I had left my domina to go back without me. And when I had told him he seemed more satisfied... I knew what I was doing... I knew it was a dreadful sin, but I would rather have sinned and borne the punishment than betray my domina... Thou wouldst have done the same! Of that am I glad... But I was very unhappy..."

Nyria: "I will tell thee what I can about the plotings of Regulus and Martial, but thou wilt understand that I heard of them only in snatches and that my thoughts were troubled concerning Valeria. And also, it is best for the power of me that I go not after those discoverings which bear not upon myself.

Now, thou dost remember that I told thee of two men who were loitering outside the house of Licinius on that dusky evening when he did declare to Valeria his secret presence in Rome: and, methinks, those men may have seen him embrace her and draw her within his gate... Also, that they had been set to spy upon him but, desiring to make certain, were waiting to fall upon him until the time should be ripe... I did know afterwards—though, in the strange darkness that came upon me, I cannot tell whence I gat the knowledge—that there were two sets of spies following after Licinius..."

Firstly, there were the spies of the lord Regulus whose business it was to discover wherein Licinius was concerned in the Judent plan against Caesar of which I heard talk between Juvenal and Stephanus. But, seeing that those of whom then they spake had not been condemned, I know not if Licinius had to do with that plot or with another. And, secondly, there were the spies of Martial upon the love-meetings of Licinius with Valeria, so that
mischief should be wrought through Paulinus becoming privy to the matter. And these two sets of spies, of which the chief were Thanna and Gregorio, did meet as thou knowest—mayhap, at first, by chance—around the villa of Licinius, and, though of differing purpose, did each guess at the other’s aim.

For I would have thee understand that the lord Regulus,¹ being one of those to whom the State gave reward for bringing witness against traitors, he did hire certain men for such common work as was needed at the outset, not greatly troubling himself save where the matter were of good profit or urgent moment, and then did Thanna bestow her wits upon his service.

Whereas Martial, not being a State Informer, did act from private grudge and, maybe, the hope of secret gain, seeing that Paulinus had, friendly-wise, charged him to keep a watch upon Valeria, and ‘twas well reported of Paulinus that he was ever ready to reward a friend and to pay alike for vengeance upon an enemy.

But, at that time, I did not rightly understand what things were going on, though I guessed that Gregorio was always trying to watch upon my domina, yet, methought, that was just his jealous way. Thou dost remember, he had threatened to betray Valeria long before, but seeing he had done naught—for thus I then believed—I thought he would not dare to do it now. I knew not that he had gained his master’s ear, when Paulinus came back from Egypt, and had set his suspicion upon Licinius: and that, at first, Paulinus would not listen, and when he did listen, he would not wholly believe... And, thou knowest, Valeria was taken ill that night and afterwards, Archigenes did speak to Paulinus, who gave his pledge.

I have told thee of that darkness which came upon me, and, verily, the confusion of my mind is great concerning that time: scarce do I know how the summer went... I knew that I had lied to Paulinus, and the lie did sorely irk my soul...

Yet, I minded me how Stephanus had been wont to say that ‘tis sometimes a man’s duty to lie: and that when it were a matter of saving a friend, no wrong should come from it to his soul. And then, methought, that if I had thus satisfied Paulinus and saved Valeria from his wrath, neither would there come harm from this sin that I had done... For long after that day I saw not Paulinus again. When I went in, I told my domina that he had met me and had questioned me concerning her and that I had put him off—I said not in what manner. She just answered shortly, seeming to be full of her own thought, and my domina is so proud that though she knew I understood the matter, I could not speak to her freely concerning Licinius... and so I went away.

But I felt sick... And the cloud came over me and I think I must have fainted. I remember not what happened... Aeola was with me and she was frightened—Aeola was ever easily affrighted—and she contrived to let the domina know... The domina only said that I was to be tended and did not further concern herself. For there was naught to make trouble about, save that I could not work.

But that night I was light-headed and did not talk nonsense. And Aeola was yet more frightened and sent word to Stephanus. And when Stephanus came, he gave me potions and said that I must be carefully tended. And,

¹ Regulus—Advocate, Informer. See Appendix 23, Bk. III.
fearing lest in my fever I should speak of that which was best left untold, he directed that Aeola alone should watch beside me.

Now this did not please my domina, for Aeola, having become a good serving-maid, she depended, in my absence, most upon her. Therefore, she gave command that one of the other women, and not Aeola, should tend me.

Then Stephanus sent a message to the Domina—for he could not see her—that he would not answer for my life were I placed under unskilled care, or that of one with whom I was not friends, as with Aeola. But, hearing, on entering the house next day, that Valeria had nevertheless sent for Aeola and, being about to demand admittance that he might lay the case before her, he met Paulinus, who was just departing for Albanum, and made bold to speak to him about me.

Now Paulinus was ever kindly to his slaves and never denied us if a matter were brought justly before him. Whereon, Stephanus told him the difficulty. But Paulinus said that he could not interfere between women, and that if the Domina needed her maiden she must have her, but that Stephanus could procure a skilled nurse and the steward would pay him for her service. This, thou understandest, I knew not then, but was told afterwards.

But that was not to Stephanus's way of thinking, for he would trust no stranger. 'Twas then that he bethought him of Aemilia's father's farm, knowing they were my friends and that Aemilia favoured the Christians, wherefore, if they should learn that I was a Christian, they would not betray me.

So then Stephanus asked that I might be removed to the house of a friend in the country, and to this Paulinus gave ready consent. Wherefore, Aeola did prepare me and Stephanus obtained a litter and bore me out, going with me himself, and Aeola remained in her service of Valeria.

I was not then always unknowing of everything, but only at times when the fever ran high. . . . But I did not see my domina before I went to the farm.

I liked not to go away. I had liefer have been at home and I wished greatly to be in Rome when the Blessed Apostle John should visit there, it being rumoured that he would come. And to miss hearing him would have been a matter more grievous than I could contemplate, my whole mind being set upon it. Yet, I feared to say much of that to Stephanus, for he would tell me that if I had thought more of myself I would not be ill: and when I spoke of desiring to come back for my meetings he answered that the meetings would wait and that, were I not wise, I would never come back at all. Therefore, I did not argue with Stephanus but determined to get me well.

And now I remember not much about the journey. The litter was cool, for there were thick curtains, and Stephanus kept by me, though he had a mule led behind to ride if he should get over-fatigued. But, most of the way, he walked beside my litter. It was, haply, some fourteen or fifteen miles—I know not. But we did halt, half-way, beside a stream under some trees, and there Stephanus fed me. . . . The change of air had seemed to do me good. I felt better already. But he would not give me wine—only milk. . . . I was very tired when we got in and that is all I can remember. . . .

They gave me kindly welcome. Aemilia was there. And now, I mind me that Plinius could not yet have remarried or Aemilia would have been with Calpurnia. She was spending the summer at the farm with her husband and her babes, one of these being ill. Aemilia tended me and it seemed that I
got quickly better. . . . And yet, I know that it was longer than I thought before I was well.

Thou knowest that it was quite an old couple—Aemilia's parents—at the farm. Aemilia had a younger brother who helped to work it. Aemilia's elder brother was married and had a farm of his own. Now Aemilia's husband, Rusticus, did also work a little on the farm to help for his keep, though, methinks, Plinius, having now no great need of him and Aemilia, was generous in paying for their disposal. But Aemilia was proud and would have her husband aid her father. Therefore he did all such errands as were needed by Aemilia's father about the country and in Rome, and was often in the city. And thus 'twas he who brought me news of the Christians and of the Apostle's coming. . . . And I, being set upon returning for to hear him, did consult with Aemilia, who was desirous to attend herself but could not leave her sick babe.

But I dared not say aught to Stephanus, for he would have forbidden me. He came out three or four times to see me and, each time, said I had best remain where I was. For though, methinks, he knew naught of any danger to the Christians, he liked me to be secure where I was well tended, and he feared that, if I should overstrain myself, the fever might return. 'Twas very pleasant up there but I was not happy. I missed my domina—I missed her sorely. I used to think that perhaps she might come out and see me, but she never came. She might have done so without much trouble, but I knew it was not likely she would come. Stephanus's coming did not quite satisfy me and he would keep on again about wanting me to marry him. I said 'No,' I could not leave my domina, and he answered that he needed me far more than she did. . . . But again I told him 'No,'—because I knew that she could not have got on without me. She could not manage for herself. . . . And I wondered how she had been doing all that time in Rome. . . . My domina had not gone away, at all: I knew that it was because she did not like to go far from Licinius: and I wondered how she arranged about that, now; for 'twas I that had helped to make it easy for her and him. . . . I hoped she would trust no one else, seeing there was nobody fit to be trusted. . . . I could not say much to Stephanus—it was her secret, not mine. But I bade him go and find out how she was and to tell me when he came again if all were going well and there was no trouble in the house. And then he said that he had been on the Coelian before he came, and had called to ask if there were any message or aught else for me, but that Valeria would not see him, and that it was not likely she should trouble herself on such a matter. He felt angrily about her and he misjudged her. But he need not have said it so unkindly. Yet I knew 'twas because of his love for me. . . .

I was still feeling ill, but I thought I should be better down there. . . . I wanted so to get back to her: there seemed a sense of trouble in the air. And I was wondering all the time about so many things. . . . And about Stephanus too. . . . I tried to put him away from my mind, but he would make himself thought of, sometimes. I could not see what was to be done. . . . I was very fond of Stephanus, thou knowest, and I supposed I would have to marry some day. But I did not know what I should feel afterwards, and I was always afraid of what I could not understand—that is—things down there amongst people—thou knowest—hard things . . . of that kind.

Therefore, I told no one but Aemilia and her people that I was going
back to Rome, and I hired me a litter, for which they lent me the money. . . . Oh, I know not if 'twere ever paid them again. . . .

And now I would say to thee that I know not whether at that time I did understand aught of the truth about the spying on Licinius and of the Judean plot. And yet, methinks, there had come to me somewhat of it. Mayhap, Stephanus had spoken of certain whisperings in Rome. . . . Yet naught had I said to Stephanus of Licinius having returned, knowing that 'twas secret business that had brought him and being afeard within me that 'twas somewhat against the State. But I knew not of myself and methought Licinius would have told my domina and that she would have prevailed with him for his safety’s sake. Methinks, Licinius intended that none should know until all was ready and that then he would carry his purpose through in the teeth of everything. Oh, that was the great and terrible mistake. . . . If she had known . . . if he had told her, she would never have done that thing which brought about his ruin. She would have protected him at any cost. . . . Why am I saying that? I am not there. . . . My mind is not clear. . . . It all seems outside me. . . . Something presses on me . . . something dreadful about my domina. . . . I shall get it. . . . But I cannot give it to thee now. . . . When thou dost want me to find out any special thing, put thy mind upon it before and then I know what I am to do. It is as it would be down there. . . . If thou didst go forth without motive thou wouldst pick up only that which thou didst happen to see. . . . If thou dost know what thou art going for, then wilt thou hunt for it. I cannot always get things at the time. . . . Those things which I myself have done I know and I can do. But when I have not been there I must go and find out. . . ."